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In These Times

INDEPENDENT NEWS & VIEWS

May 28, 2001

TEAR DOWN THE WALLS WHAT'S NEXT AFTER QUEBEC?

DAVID MOBERG
NAOMI KLEIN
DAVID GRAEBER
ABBY SCHER



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In These Times

INDEPENDENT NEWS & VIEWS

"... with liberty and justice for all"

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Illustrator: Terry LaBan

Webmaster: Steve Anderson

Publisher: Bob Burnett

Associate Publisher: Julie Fain

Circulation Director: Luli Buxton

Circulation Manager: Peter Hoyt

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Editorial correspondence and **letters** should be sent to: 2040 N. Milwaukee Ave., Chicago, IL 60647. Phone: (773) 772-0100. Fax: (773) 772-4180. E-mail: itt@inthesetimes.com.

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Publisher's Notes

Typically when you bring up the subject of values progressives flinch, as if they were about to be hit with the Bible. For those on the left the working assumption seems to be that discussing values is akin to proselytizing. As a result, many progressives talk a lot about rights, but not much about values.

Social conservatives speak passionately about traditional values because they are defending patriarchy. If we accept a progressive view of the family—male and female as equals—then we must question traditional forms of social organization that are rigidly patriarchal and hierarchical. This perspective challenges everything from the military establishment (a few white male leaders, bound by traditional values, who in their wisdom make the vital decisions about war and peace) to the typical corporation (another set of white male leaders bound by marketplace values) to the Catholic Church (with its all male leadership).

To ignore values is to cede a vital aspect of political discourse to conservatives. To build a new progressive movement, to clarify who we are and what we stand for, we need to talk about our core values. Progressives believe in family values, but our concept of the family is more inclusive. We share a belief in equality—regardless of gender, race, ethnicity, class or sexual orientation. So, we can begin by asserting that in a two-parent family the mother and father are equals—that our vision of the family is non-patriarchal.

From the conservative perspective, the man is the breadwinner, the agent in the world and the defender of the home, while the woman cares for the home and family (and nowadays also works at least part time). Thus men are priests or ministers, corporation presidents, generals, and so forth. This traditional view inherently limits the role and power of women—relegates them to a secondary role in the family and in society.

Thus the pro-life-vs.-pro-choice debate is about power—who decides whether a woman should continue to carry the fetus within her womb. From the traditional values' perspective, she doesn't have that right, men do—her husband, father, minister, judge, etc. From the progressive perspective

a woman has that choice because she is a fully empowered individual.

Because of the progressive failure to speak out about family values, conservatives deliberately identify us as supporting all non-traditional family constellations—no matter how bizarre. Thus we have been accused of supporting '60s values and strange family arrangements such as free love communes and polygamous groups. Of course this is foolishness as most progressives are in couple-based families. Many of us are in families with only one parent, and some are in others where the couple consists of mixed ethnicity or same-sex partners. These are legitimate families, which we should honor and defend.

Conservatives extol the traditional view of the family because it is what they know. To move away from it is profoundly unsettling. More than giving up power, it requires them to restructure their view of themselves and the world.

But it also raises uncomfortable questions about the U.S. worldview and the wisdom of our role as the world police force. Because conservatives view everything through the lens of patriarchy, they see the world as inherently dangerous—where it is a unique role of men to defend the home and the country. This requires guns in the home and a huge military in the country. The threat, as conservatives see it, is external.

Progressives must counter this view by clearly stating the real threat to the country

Public safety is threatened when the social contract is abandoned for the sake of a military buildup.

is internal. Public safety is threatened when the social contract is abandoned for the sake of a military buildup, when the major congressional legislation is tax cuts for the rich and when our citizens arm themselves to the teeth. In light of this, the peace dividend is not only plausible, but essential to the formation of a just society and, indeed, to the continuation of democracy.

As always, I welcome your feedback (bburnett@inthesetimes.com).

Bob Burnett

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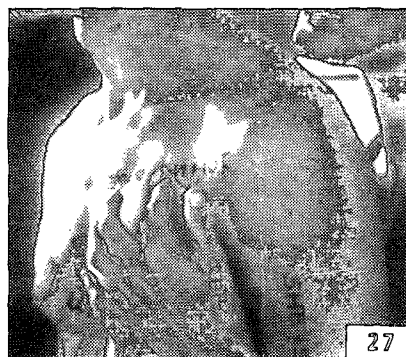
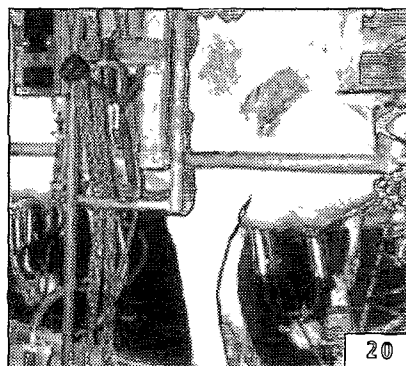
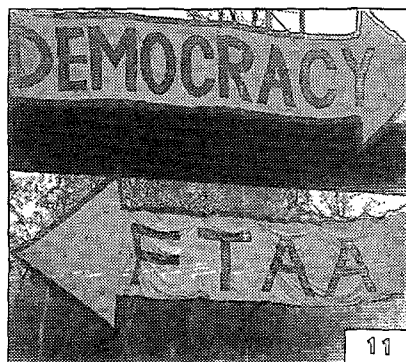
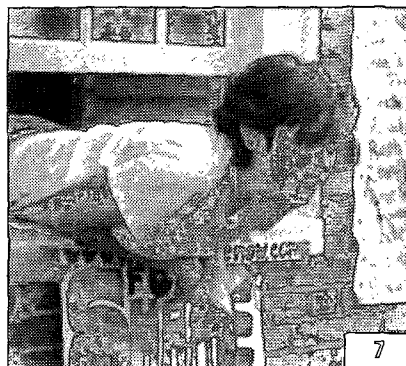
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Cover photo: Konrad Fisher

Portrait of the Artists

Sandy Zipp in his review ("The Battle for San Francisco," April 2) and Michael Calderon-Zaks in his letter to the editor (April 30) both seem to think that defending artists is an indefensible position of mine, perhaps because they have narrowed down the broad spectrum of artists to mean latecomer, middle-class visual artists who are focused on their own careers and complicit with gentrification.

Given that my book *Hollow City: The Siege of San Francisco and the Crisis of American Urbanism* opens with the then-about-to-be-evicted Saint John Coltrane African Orthodox Church, ends with the artists Johanna Poethig and Jennifer Wofford who can no longer afford to live in San Francisco but still work with the city's youth, and, of the dozens of community-based and activist artists it portrays, gives the muralist (and Mission District evictee) Juana Alicia more attention than anyone else, theirs is not an accurate reading.

Zipp takes from my book the saga of the artist-created "life-work space" zoning-code exemptions, which I called "the biggest Trojan Horse artists ever dragged into a city," but leaves out my accounts of the many artists who vehemently opposed it to conclude: "Solnit soft-pedals the bohemian factor in gentrification for, in part, deep and abiding emotional reasons." I'm not sure how he gained access to my deep and abiding emotional life, but attention to the full range of my facts would have been more relevant.

Calderon-Zaks devotes much of his letter to the longer history of urban renewal and its effect on vulnerable communities, with the implication I overlooked it. I wonder if he made it to chapter two of *Hollow City*, which is a history of that renewal, or noticed the book's historic photo essays by David Johnson and Ira Nowinski documenting the communities that were ravaged in the process. It is because of the roles of artists like the Coltrane Church's musicians, Juana Alicia, Poethig, Wofford, Johnson and Nowinski in nurturing community life and preserving radical histories that I argued for the importance of artists to cities in the first place.

Rebecca Solnit
San Francisco

Politics Counts

Ted Kleine makes a number of errors and omissions in the story "Counted Out" (April 16). The premise of the story is that the Bush administration, through

Commerce Secretary Don Evans, made 3.3 million people disappear by not using adjustment or sampling in the 2000 Census. The story says: "Evans refused to allow the Census Bureau to use the scientific process of sampling, which would have adjusted the population figures to correct for undercounts in minority and immigrant neighborhoods."

But the fact of the matter is, the professionals at the Census Bureau themselves recommended to the commerce secretary that he not adjust the Census. To suggest that Evans suppressed this information is wholly inaccurate and misleading. What's more, it was the Democrats who for months wanted the Census Bureau professionals to have the final word on the Census. However, when the bureau professionals decided against adjustment they suddenly decided they didn't want the professionals to have the final say.

While *In These Times* certainly has the right to editorialize on any particular side of an issue, it should not do so in its news stories. Your readers have an expectation of factual content in your reporting.

Chip Walker
Deputy Staff Director
Subcommittee on the Census
U.S. House of Representatives

Ted Kleine replies: *I'm in favor of census sampling for the same reason Chip Walker is against it: because it will help elect Democrats. If a Democrat had been in the White House, the Census Bureau would have released sampled figures. The party in power will count people in a way that favors itself. Once Evans stripped the Census Bureau of the final decision on sampling, there was no question sampling was dead. As a partisan Republican, Evans never would have approved a count that added 3.3 million marginal people—most of them Democrats—to the official population. Walker's party got what it wanted, so what is he complaining about?*

Dare To Reconsider

Before Americans consider a new direction for U.S. drug policy, we should take a long, hard look at where we've been ("What's Your Anti-Drug?" April 16). Not another dollar spent, prison built, innocent shot, cop corrupted, war waged, right repealed, DARE program taught or drug raider deployed, until someone, somewhere, somehow, outside the halls of the government created anti-drug industry, takes a long, hard, unbiased look at what, just may be, nothing more than a hysterical witch-hunt run amok.

Have we actually accomplished one tangible thing of note, besides enriching those who espouse and implement these draconian measures? Now that DARE has been exposed as having produced exactly the opposite effect we desired, one must question the achievements of the other freelance anti-drug acronyms. What exactly does our dollar buy? Do they actually encourage, rather than prevent, drug use?

It's time Americans revisit the whole issue and look at what we've done to our fellow citizens and our children in the name of the war on drugs. Shouldn't we critically review the current scheme, and, at the very least, consider cheaper, more effective, less harmful approaches to America's drug problem? It's never too late to reconsider.

Mike Plylar
Kremmling, Colorado

Queen of Comedy

I just got the April 16 issue of *In These Times*, and I've already gotten my money's worth after only reading the last two pages. Male that I am, on picking up the magazine, I immediately noticed the fetching cartoon that illustrates "Operation Queen Esther." Paula Kamen's piece was a great stress reliever during these early dour days of Dubya. I laughed and I cried, thinking over and over as I read, would it not be so! Bring back Paula soon.

Burnis E. (Gene) Tuck
Fresno, California

Giving to Indians

Many thanks for "Indian Givers" (April 2). It is appalling that white people are still ripping off indigenous people. However, a few Indian causes are worthy of praise. Some of the best are Olympic gold medal winner Billy Mills' Runing Strong for American Indian Youth, Allies of the Lakota, the Dakota Indian Foundation, Wounded Knee District School, the Native American Scholarship Fund and the American Indian College Fund.

C. Knuth Fischer
President
Friends of Native Americans
West Chester, Pennsylvania

Please send letters to:

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2040 N. Milwaukee Ave.

Chicago, IL 60647

Or e-mail: itt@inthesetimes.com

Please keep your letter short and include your address and daytime phone number.

Cincinnati Blues

By Salim Muwakkil

Cincinnati Mayor Charlie Luken has announced plans to appoint a commission to study the three days of racial protest, violence and vandalism that attracted national attention in April. While Luken is trying to demonstrate his concern and commitment by appointing the commission, it has precisely the opposite message for those of us familiar with the historic patterns of racial uprisings and their aftermaths.

Appointing commissions has been the standard response to urban violence. These "blue-ribbon" bodies are appointed with great fanfare. They invariably conclude that our nation needs to attend to lingering and multiplying racial disparities to help "fix" the problem. Then, their conclusions are resolutely ignored.

In 1967, President Lyndon Johnson imppaneled the Kerner Commission (named for the chairman, Illinois Gov. Otto Kerner) to investigate the causes of the urban riots that exploded in nearly 100 cities during that "long hot summer." When the commission interviewed Kenneth Clark, a psychologist and author known for his expertise on racial matters, he explained that he had just read a report written after the 1919 Chicago race riot. "It is as if I were reading the report of the investigating committee on the Harlem riot of 1935, the report of the investigating committee on the Harlem riot of 1943, the report of the McCone Commission on the Watts riot," Clark said. "The same analyses, the same recommendations, the same inaction."

His comments were incorporated into the commission's conclusions, which read in part: "In practically every city that has experienced racial disruption since the summer of 1964, abrasive relationships between police and Negroes and other minority groups have been a major source of grievance, tension and ultimately, disorder."

And this was written before violent uprisings in Miami in 1980 and 1989, both sparked by police killings of unarmed motorists; before the 1992 "Rodney King riots" in Los Angeles;

before another Florida city, St. Petersburg, erupted in 1996 after cops killed an unarmed 18-year-old motorist who had been stopped for speeding.

Militant protests organized by the Rev. Al Sharpton probably pre-empted a conflagration in New York in 1999, after four white cops killed unarmed Amadou Diallo in a hail of 41 bullets, and again after they were found innocent a year later by an upstate New York jury. Chicago teetered on an angry edge after several unarmed black youths were killed

and assaulted by the city's notoriously brutal police force over a period of months beginning in late 1998; an aggressive campaign of protest marches may have headed-off more violent reactions there as well.

There is no shortage of suggestions for how to better the situation. Echoing previous reports and foreshadowing those to come, the Kerner Commission urged the government to invest heavily in job training, education and housing for black Americans, or we would "make

permanent the division of our country into two societies."

But no sustained effort has been made to seriously address the problems identified in the scores of commission reports. Places like New York and Chicago remain tinderboxes—as do many other urban areas of the country. (And not so urban: Last year, Louisville, Kentucky came very close to a Cincinnati-style flare-up after police killed an unarmed black youth.) In fact, most American cities with a significant black population are just a police assault away from a major disturbance.

Since the country's first organized forces of police were the slave patrols, blacks and cops have a long history of antagonism. The contemporary war on drugs has badly

Most American cities with a large black population are just a police assault away from a major disturbance.

exacerbated that rocky relationship. Drug commerce is often the sole, and surely the most lucrative, employment option for increasing numbers of undereducated black youths. By targeting this population in the drug war, we have amassed the world's largest population of prisoners.

We don't need more commissions to "fix" these problems. We need to end the war against black youth. ■

Terry LaBan



NOW or Never March kicks off renewed fight for reproductive rights

By Miranda Kennedy

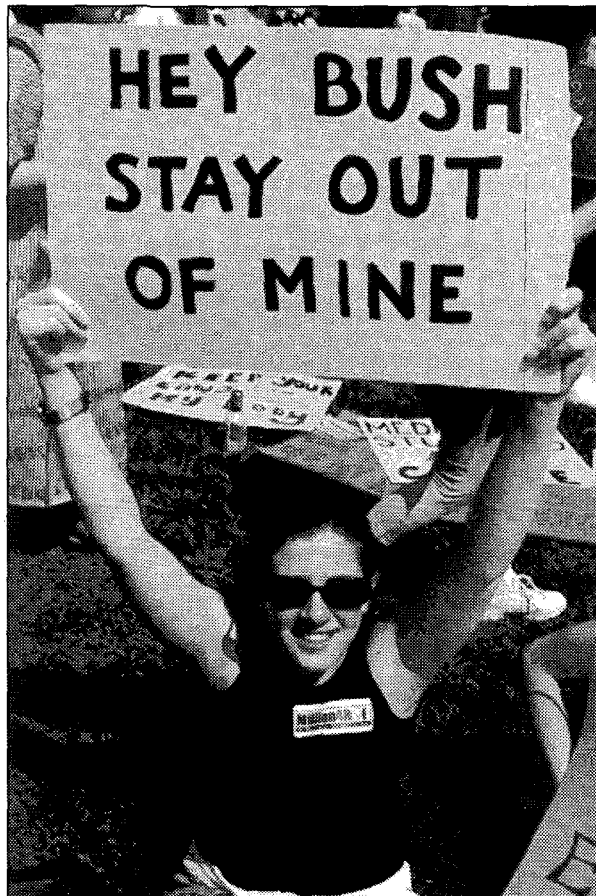
WASHINGTON—If you happened to wander through sunny Senate Park on April 22, you might have thought you'd run into a summer festival from an era past. Close to 10,000 women and men—mostly young, mostly white, mostly middle-class—turned out for the National Organization for Women's Emergency Action for Women's Lives. But the carefully orchestrated march and rally conveyed little outrage or urgency. Protesters lounged on the grass listening to elected officials, speakers from a range of progressive organizations and feminist folk singers. Later in the afternoon, they formed tidy lines to march past the Supreme Court—which wasn't in session—and down Independence Avenue, past rows of anti-choicers waiting with pictures of bloodied fetuses. The marchers toted the familiar "NOW rounds," and signs reading "Fight the Radical Right" and "Young Feminists Mobilizing."

In March, when NOW President Patricia Ireland declared a "state of emergency" in women's lives, she was trying to jump-start feminists out of the "complacency of the Clinton years" and bring attention to the startling setbacks George W. Bush has imposed on women's reproductive choice.

On Bush's second day in office, he reinstated the Reagan-era global gag rule, restricting funds to international groups that provide abortions or abortion counseling—even if these services are funded by other means. Bush's appointments of Attorney General John Ashcroft and Health and Human Services Secretary Tommy Thompson do not bode well for the enforcement of abortion laws, availability of contraception, insurance coverage for reproductive care, funding of stem-cell research or sex education. Furthermore, Supreme Court Justice Sandra Day O'Connor, who has

been the crucial fifth vote (in a 5-to-4 split court) upholding *Roe v. Wade*, may retire at the end of this term. Bush is unlikely to nominate pro-choice justices to replace O'Connor or other anticipated retirees.

The Bush administration's attacks on women's rights and its allegiance with conservative Christian elements clearly signal danger. But it is unlikely that *Roe* will actually be overturned. Rather, Republicans will just make it easier for states to render reproductive health care inaccessible—just as they did during the Clinton administration.



While Bill Clinton staved off some major offensives against reproductive freedom, limitations on women's choice continued unabated during his presidency. During the '90s, abortion services dropped dramatically, leaving 85 percent of counties nationwide without a provider (see "Access Denied," January 8). Hundreds of Catholic hospitals merged with smaller ones, and half of them eliminated some or all reproductive health services. Currently, 31 states are enforcing parental consent or notifica-

tion laws for minors seeking an abortion.

What's more, due to the 1996 welfare reform law—which Clinton proudly backed—many low-income women have lost Medicaid coverage. According to the Alan Guttmacher Institute, from 1994 to 1998, the number of African-American women of reproductive age enrolled in Medicaid fell by 21 percent. By 1998, nearly one in five women in the same age group had no insurance of any kind.

It has been widely recognized that most post-*Roe* women have taken the right to an abortion for granted—even as it has become increasingly inaccessible to rural women, poor women, young women and women of color. In 1992, when the first Bush administration was threatening choice, NOW's March for Women's Lives drew 750,000 supporters, making it the largest abortion rights demonstration ever. Afterward, when Clinton was elected to office, activists breathed a sigh of relief and went off to do other things—just as the floodgates were opened to anti-choice legislation at the state level. During the eight years Clinton was in office, NOW—the largest women's organization in the country—called no other mass mobilizations for reproductive rights.

For those on the frontlines of abortion, clinic violence and harassment have long been at a crisis point. One abortion doctor scheduled to speak at the NOW rally asked someone else to read her statement, saying she was afraid for herself and her family after being targeted by anti-choice activists who have her home address. Dr. James Pendergraft, an African-American late-term abortion provider who owns five clinics in Florida, spoke publicly for the first time about his convictions for extortion, conspiracy and mail fraud in federal court. As he awaits a May sentencing that could put him in jail for up to 30 years, his supporters say that the trumped-up charges are about abortion, not extortion. Although NOW has brought him into the fold, most of the national pro-

choice groups he shared the stage with have refused to support his case.

According to the feminist mainstream, the way to tackle what Ireland describes as "the beginning of a long and crucial fight for our lives" is through the institutions. This year, NOW has focused on mobilizing young women, visiting 34 college campuses in the 30 days leading up to the rally. The action also capped two weeks of lobbying visits to senators' homes during the congressional spring break, and kicked off an Internet lobbying campaign for issues like equal pay legislation and reversing the global gag rule.

But not all agree that feminist activism should be focused on bringing the Democrats back and saving the Supreme Court. "A really low point in the day," says Debra Sweet, a volunteer active in supporting abortion providers, "was when march leaders tried to start a response-chant ('What do we want? A filibuster! When do we want it? Now!') Is that the highest we can aim for? To filibuster a Bush nominee to the most sour court in the land?"

March attendees and other activists criticized the NOW action for a lack of diversity and publicity, as well as the timing of the action, which collided with both the FTAA protests in Quebec and Earth Day. According to Ireland, the timing was unfortunate but unavoidable, and was based around religious holidays and college finals. While some suspect that NOW was simply unaware of the thousands of radical youth who were planning to travel to Canada to protest the Summit of the Americas, Ireland emphasizes that they are working across movement lines. "I think this opportunity to mobilize for reproductive freedom will only enhance the strength of all our movements: civil rights, environmental and anti-globalization," she says.

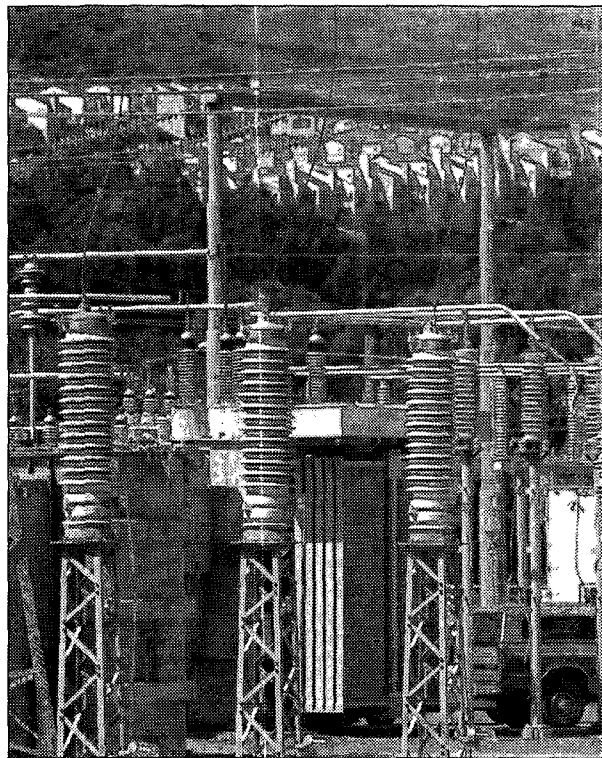
Organizers hoped to foster alliances, and the list of speakers—including representatives from the global economic justice network 50 Years Is Enough and the Coalition of Labor Union Women—reflected that. Still, although many marchers in Washington were first-time activists, many of them were also one-issue activists. Until that changes, mainstream feminism isn't going to look like democracy any more than Woodstock did. ■

In the Dark

While California faces rolling blackouts, utility companies are rolling in the dough

By Aaron Glantz and Kata Mester

SACRAMENTO, CALIFORNIA—The crisis brought on by California's energy deregulation is showing no signs of letting up. On March 28, state regulators increased electricity rates by 46 percent, the second rate hike in three months. Two weeks later, Pacific Gas and Electric (PG&E)—the state's largest utility—filed for bankruptcy. The second-largest utility, Southern California Edison, says it could be next.



Poor neighborhoods will house most new power plants.

California is now expecting at least 34 days of rolling blackouts this summer.

Meanwhile, executive orders from Democratic Gov. Gray Davis have gutted the state's legendary environmental laws to allow the construction of at least 25 new natural gas power plants—most of which will be built in low-income and minority communi-

ties. To keep the lights on, the state government has bought billions of dollars in electricity on the expensive spot market. Because the state hasn't passed the entire cost of the power on to consumers, the spending spree is likely to jeopardize health care and education programs when the legislature approves the state budget in June.

At corporate headquarters, however, times have never been better. Quarterly reports issued in late April show gigantic profit increases for every company that owns power plants in California. Houston-based Enron (George W. Bush's largest lifetime campaign contributor) posted a 281 percent increase in revenues over the first quarter of 2001. Reliant Energy, which is headquartered across the street from Enron, doubled its profits for the same time period.

Meanwhile, both companies are refusing to cooperate with an antitrust investigation launched by California Attorney General Bill Lockyer, who contends the generating companies are "gaming the market" by strategically taking their plants offline for unnecessary "unscheduled maintenance" to keep prices high. The companies say they won't hand over internal documents the attorney general subpoenaed until he agrees to keep them private—a move Lockyer is not willing to consider.

The parent companies of California's utilities also are turning handsome profits. After the state deregulated its energy market in 1996, PG&E and Southern California Edison transferred a combined \$9 billion out of their utility companies to their corporate parents. Those funds were used to buy power plants in New England, New Zealand, Great Britain and South Africa—ventures that are reaping hefty returns. Even the managers of the failed utility companies are making out

quite well. PG&E executives Gordon Smith and Bob Glynn gave themselves bonuses immediately before filing for Chapter 11. According to the Securities and Exchange Commission, PG&E filed for bankruptcy with nearly \$3 billion in the bank. "Even a blind pig can figure out that there's price gouging in that kind of market," says Loretta Lynch, chief of the California Public Utilities Commission.

As *In These Times* went to press, the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC) agreed to impose temporary price controls on electricity during energy emergencies, but the ruling falls far short of the price caps many Democrats are advocating. In the absence of substantial federal price controls, progressive legislators are advocating a combination of plant seizures, punitive taxes and conservation measures, a plan Davis has only

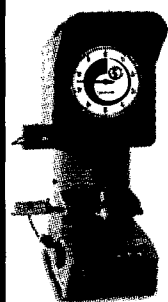
partially endorsed. Although the governor recently signed two bills allocating \$850 million for energy conservation programs this year—the most ever by any government entity in America—he used the line-item veto to nix nearly \$350 million for energy-efficiency programs targeted at working- and middle-class families.

Davis is even more timid when it comes to the idea of taxing the generating companies into lowering their rates. While he has said he would be open to tax increases for companies that make more than 100 percent profit, he hasn't said he would sign such a bill. Because of that, the tax measures are moving slowly through the legislature.

Davis has been even less willing to take on utility companies directly through plant seizures, a proposal he talked about in his State of the State address in January but has since aban-

doned. Because he declared a state of emergency, the governor can order an immediate takeover of any facility while leaving the price to be negotiated over time. Consumer advocates see plant seizures as the only way out in the near future. "We've got to rein in these power gougers," insists Nettie Hoge of the Utility Reform Network. "Until we show them who's boss, the prices will just go up and up."

"If they seize one of our power plants, we will turn California into Indonesia," threatens Jan Smutty-Jones, president of the Independent Energy Producers Association, the power plant lobby. Smutty-Jones says private companies would leave California immediately if the state cracks down on price gougers, causing a massive shortage of electricity and rolling regular blackouts. He says member companies would have a similar response if the state enacts the profits tax.



Appall-o-Meter

By Dave Mulcahey

BVM or ATM? 4.5

In addition to the countless statues around the globe she causes to wiggle and weep, she has saved a pontiff from an assassin's bullet and delivered the Eastern Bloc from collectivism. So why make a federal case if the Blessed Virgin Mary decides to favor an unsuspecting family with a million in cash?

The Colombian cops don't quite see it that way. In early April, according to Reuters, Colombian customs officials nabbed three adults who arrived in Bogota on a flight from Spain with two kids in tow and wads of U.S. currency secreted in their bags and babies' diapers. Called to account, a female member of the group explained that the Virgin had appeared before the family and the money simply fell into their hands.

Skull and Boneheads 4.1

It's springtime, and at colleges across the land young men are humiliating each other in rituals of pantomime sodomy and devil worship. Ah, fraternity rush! And nowhere is the action hotter than at Skull and Bones, the Yale secret society and hothouse of spooks, tycoons and mandarins.

Or so one was led to believe until the *New York Observer* blew the lid off Skull and Bones' supersecret ini-

tiation rite. In April, columnist Ron Rosenbaum and a team of spies armed with high-tech surveillance equipment penetrated the Tomb, the society's posh clubhouse, and recorded its mummary. What they found was a lame devil barking lewd orders at initiates ("Lick my bum-hole" was the refrain) in the voice of George W. Bush. An occasional plaint was heard to "take the plunger out of my ass," which "W" would answer with promises to "ream you like I reamed Gore."

High marks for verisimilitude, low marks for wit. As for the Bones' processional chant—"THE HANGMAN EQUALS DEATH! / THE DEVIL EQUALS DEATH! / DEATH EQUALS DEATH!"—jeez, fellas, would it kill you to at least look up some Slayer lyrics?

Lolita She Ain't 5.3

Who says there are no second acts in American lives? Last year, at the ripe old age of 31, Treva Throneberry finally graduated from Evergreen High School in Vancouver, Washington. What's more, reports the *Clark County Columbian*, she played on the tennis team and went to prom with a kid 12 years her junior. Problem is, she did all this under the assumed name of Brianna Stewart, presenting

herself as a homeless teen on the run from an abusive background.

One classmate recalls thinking she was a teacher at first, but otherwise Throneberry, a Texas native, appears to have had little trouble getting people to buy her story. She found a series of families willing to open their homes to her, and she eventually qualified for foster care. Her true identity was discovered only after she submitted fingerprints to the state in an attempt to get a Social Security card.

Now Throneberry faces charges of theft and perjury. Other legal fallout may lie ahead. In her travels around the area, she was rather fast and loose with sexual assault accusations. An area man was convicted of unlawful sex with a minor after a liaison with Throneberry in 1997. She was 28 at the time.



TERRY LABAN

Carolina proceeds with its criminal case against the ILA pickets, Riley says, "dockworkers around the world have pledged to shut down their ports on the first day of the trial." This coordinated "day of action" has been endorsed by all the longshore unions in Europe, plus the West Coast-based International Longshore and Warehouse Union (ILWU), which is donating \$100,000 to Local 1422's defense.

Supporting such cross-border alliances—particularly those initiated through unofficial channels—was a key goal of the conference. Along with the large North American contingent, participants included trade unionists from France, England, Germany, Japan, Mexico, El Salvador, Argentina and Colombia. Many came to Detroit in search of rank-and-file allies within common multinational employers like Lucent, Daimler-Chrysler or Delphi (a recent spin-off of General Motors), or to discuss strategies for resisting worldwide threats like privatization. Out of their meetings came at least one new coalition—the International Bayer Workers Network—which now links union members from three nations at plants operated by the German pharmaceutical firm.

"Building international solidarity over issues related to globalization and free trade requires more than demo-hopping," says Kim Moody, director of the Labor Education and Research Project, which publishes *Labor Notes*. "Ninety percent of that work is local or national, ongoing and on-the-ground—like a fight for union jobs on the docks of Charleston, a general strike in Argentina, or maquiladora organizing in Mexico. We try to help with the other 10 percent—sharing information, generating publicity and making the organizational connections that can lead to concrete pressure on governments or employers."

Similar rank-and-file networking can also help build workers' power within individual unions or industries. At the conference, there was the usual large turnout by truck drivers, flight attendants, and warehouse and food processing workers who belong to Teamsters for a Democratic Union (TDU). They caucused with Tom Leedham, the Teamsters local officer from Portland, Oregon who ran against

James Hoffa for the union's presidency in 1998. Leedham is gearing up, with TDU help, for a rematch this fall.

Union activists in a recently victorious reform movement within Transport Workers Local 100 also reported on efforts to transform their 36,000-member New York subway workers' union. Meanwhile, registered nurses from several AFL-CIO affiliates, the American Nurses Association (ANA) and state organizations that have broken away from the ANA found common ground in their discussion of recent strikes against forced overtime at hospitals in Massachusetts and Michigan (see "Overtime Out," February 19).

The conference ended with an awards dinner that broke with the usual conventions of union fundraising banquets. In labor's mainstream, such events tend to be lavish and focused on self-congratulatory toasts to the top officialdom. Sometimes, even management gets invited. At *Labor Notes*, the fare is as basic as the group's bare-bones budget and no bosses are welcome. Not surprisingly, everyone honored is—in the words of their awards certificate—"a troublemaker."

Among this year's winners were Riley of the ILA, a Steelworker plant-closing

activist from Indiana named Trudy Manderfield, and an Auto Worker from Kentucky, Billy Robinson, whose local is engaged in a controversial three-year-old lockout. Also recognized were Margarita Rincon and Maria Orozco, two courageous young women fired and beaten for challenging a company union at Duro Bag, an American firm operating in Rio Bravo, Mexico. After a tour of the Midwest, the two will continue their agitation among the 1.3 million maquiladora workers who lack both independent unions and effective legal protection of their right to organize.

"It's face-to-face contacts like these that enable union members here to understand what's really happening to workers in other countries," says Dan LaBotz, author of *Labor Notes' Troublemaker's Handbook*. "The global can become local almost anywhere if we create more opportunities for people to share experiences, learn from each other and work together against common enemies." ■

Steve Early works as a national union representative. For more information on the case of the Charleston 5, contact the South Carolina AFL-CIO at (803) 798-8300.

THIS MODERN WORLD

by TOM TOMORROW



Selling the Dream

I just about did a double take when I thought I saw the image of Martin Luther King Jr. on a billboard. The civil rights leader was standing across from the Washington Monument, but instead of crowds, there was empty space. "Before you inspire, before you can touch, you must first connect," read the script below the image of King. It was an advertisement for Alcatel, a French company that describes itself as a leader in telecommunications.

Whatever they are, I am appalled, even as I learned that King's heirs were paid well so that Alcatel could use King's image. I suppose I should be grateful. After all, Alcatel could be selling something far more concrete than telecommunications awareness. What if they were selling food, athletic shoes or prescription drugs? Then we'd have to wonder how consistent those sales were with King's dream.

Communications is fuzzy and nebulous enough to be embraced, no matter what its content. So if I am to count my blessings in this dream-selling context, I suppose I have a few to count. Indeed, one might say that King's appearance in the commercial world is the highest compliment that our capitalist society can offer anyone.

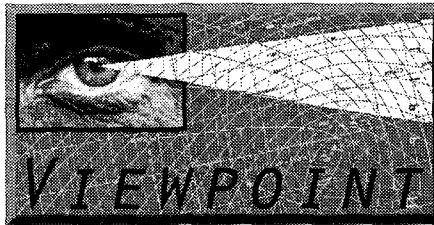
Alcatel has recognized the power of the King image, the fact that his rhetoric and imagery sell. They have made it clear that King has enough posthumous appeal to make his image worth something, and they've recognized our civil rights leader in the only way they know how, in the marketplace.

By paying his heirs, they've also put a value on King's dream, a value that has not been revealed because no one wants to say what a dream like King's costs. It seems as if we have moved from "I Have A Dream," to "Money, Money, Money."

It would be useful for the King heirs to remind themselves that King said, "If you will respect my dollars, then you must respect my person." Through Operation Breadbasket, he led boycotts against companies that did not fully include African-Americans in their

governance and operations. If he were alive today, would King embrace Alcatel or reject its corporate policies?

Some will see the King commercial debut as evidence that we have come a long way, baby. I see it as a reminder that we still have a long way to go.



After all, African-Americans remain relatively absent from corporate executive suites. We are a tiny fraction of those who pull down six-figure earnings. We don't shatter glass ceilings, but batter our heads on concrete ones. And while our images have commercial value, our work efforts are often undervalued. You can't turn on a television without hearing the Motown sound used to sell anything from automobiles to fast food. You can't listen to a radio



Would Martin Luther King have embraced Alcatel's corporate policies?

without hearing a cadence that sounds African-American, whether it is real or a matter of imitation.

Network television anchors have adopted ebonics as a second language, "dissing" and "chilling" with the worst of them. African-American life has been

woven into our nation's popular culture, though African-American lives are often pushed to the periphery. Now they've got King, too. They've taken a classic speech and turned it into a commercial moment, taken a moment in history and attempted to turn it into sales. To be sure, they paid for it, and so they should not necessarily be condemned. The fact that King was for sale, though, ought to be the cause of condemnation. A moment of conscience has been turned into a commercial construct.

The dream that has motivated so many has been turned into something that can be priced, auctioned and sold. I wouldn't mind the dream being sold if the dream had been attained. But even as we are being barraged with the Alcatel commercial, we are also being told that a Michigan court will not accept admission standards at the University of Michigan Law School when race is included as an admission factor. (Alumni, athlete or any other status is OK.) Race can't matter, this court says, because it is unfair.

The real unfairness, of course, is that race has mattered for so long that the court cannot understand that they cannot simply assert a level playing field. That's not all. Even as we are being barraged with a "dream" commercial, we face a nightmare tax cut that will exclude 56 percent of all African-Americans and Latinos from its reach.

King's heirs can sell his image, but they cannot cash out the dream because, by now, the dream no longer belongs to them. It is a dream that many share, and that many aspire to. It is a dream that transcends the trite commercialism of an Alcatel ad, a dream that the heirs can't put a dollar figure on. They can sell King's image, but they can't sell his spirit. Indeed, perhaps the King they sold will remind us to search for the dreamer in his works and in his words. ■

Julianne Malveaux is a Washington-based economist, columnist and commentator, who can be reached at jmaxoffice@aol.com.

TEAR DOWN THE WALLS

THE MOVEMENT IS BECOMING MORE GLOBAL

BY DAVID MOBERG

QUEBEC



KONRAD FISHER

The fall of Quebec's 2.5-mile, chain-link "wall of shame" during the Summit of the Americas will not rank in historical annals with the storming of the Bastille, but it was still a milestone in the movement against corporate globalization. It not only made millions of people more aware of both the proposed Free Trade Area of the Americas (FTAA) and substantial popular opposition, which gathered in Canada during the weekend of April 20 to 22. But the protests—both the direct action and the peaceful march by tens of thousands of critics from varied countries, occupations and ages—also marked a continuing evolution of a movement that is itself becoming more global.

The long-standing issues posed by capital's easy mobility—such as job loss, environmental damage, economic insecurity and inequality, sweatshops, "structural adjustment" squeezes, and threats to farmers and food consumers from corporate agribusiness—have not disappeared, but they are increasingly being consolidated within a broader framework of debate. Despite the misleading "trade" label, the issue with the FTAA is not whether trade should grow in the hemisphere, but rather how to regulate the global economy. Will the rules

favor those who are already rich and powerful, increasing inequality within and among countries? Or will the rules favor raising living standards for workers and peasants while protecting the environment?

The issues are as much political as economic for FTAA opponents—the human rights of individuals against the unfettered freedom of capital, democracy against corporate power and privilege, values of solidarity and justice against a totally marketized society. As business and political elites promote their model of a deregulated global economy where giant corporations rule, the option of reforming or modifying the proposed trade agreements to protect labor or the environment or to help the poor seems less and less realistic. The core of these agreements is deeply flawed, and the development of a comprehensive alternative model of global economic integration has become more necessary.

High on the hill of old walled Quebec, fortified behind the new wall and 6,000 police, 34 heads of state from the Americas (all except for Fidel Castro) declared their commitment to democracy, pledging to exclude from the "Summit of

the Americas process" any country that undergoes "any unconstitutional alteration or interruption of the democratic order." But this democracy clause may be as hollow as their other pledges to "strive to limit military expenditures" or to "promote compliance with internationally recognized core labor standards," neither of which Bush, for starters, intends to do.

The new clause offers a narrow and vague definition of democracy, presumably centered on holding elections, but ignoring other crucial aspects of a strong democracy, such as an equitable distribution of wealth. Venezuelan President Hugo Chavez, in an inadvertent leak of a radio feed from a closed session, made a similar point to fellow presidents: "If the democracy doesn't provide land, if it's concentrated in the hands of 2 percent of the population, we can't speak of democracy."

While U.S. representatives at the summit spoke only of the promise of growth from free trade, the Canadians alluded to the need for national governments to redistribute income from growth. Yet capital mobility in the new global trade regime severely limits the ability of governments to redistribute. And with no clear standards for enforcement, the democracy requirement will also be open to manipulation by the United States to

damages from governments whenever they believe a government policy threatens future profits. It also is likely to give corporations new powers to attack public services, forcing deregulation, privatization and marketization of the public sphere. In other words, while promising democracy, the summit leaders have given the green light to negotiate an agreement that could give foreign investors the right to nullify and cripple the democratic process through secretive trade tribunals, in addition to their bullying of governments with the carrot and stick of fickle foreign investment.

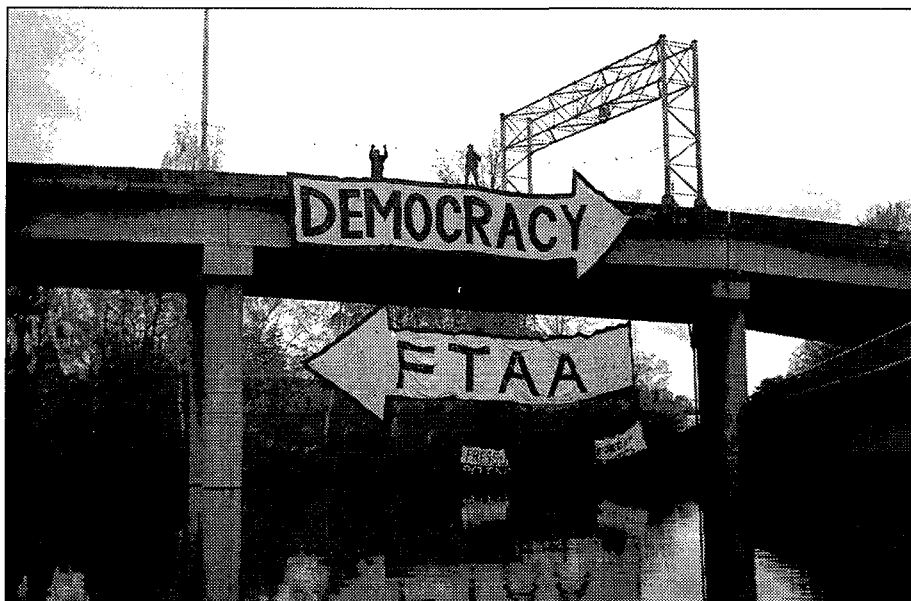
At the time of NAFTA's ratification, not even most critics imagined that the investor rights to sue states, embodied in Chapter 11 of the treaty, could have such ominous potential. Its scope is still unclear: There is no definitive public record of how many times corporations have invoked Chapter 11 (at least 17). Most cases have challenged environmental policy decisions in all three NAFTA countries, leading to reversals of laws or governmental decisions and major payments to corporations for potential lost profits (since any government decision to regulate that reduces such profits can be treated as "tantamount to appropriation," in the language of NAFTA).

Canadians at the protest in Quebec were especially worried about a UPS claim for \$160 million in damages filed against Canada last year. UPS argues that the Canadian government violates NAFTA rules because it does not provide UPS the same access to the offices and delivery system of Canada Post as it does to the government postal system's overnight delivery service.

Since the FTAA apparently will broaden coverage of services (much as negotiators are trying to do now under the World Trade Organization), critics believe that corporations could use the FTAA to undermine public services. A study by the Council of Canadians argues that the FTAA "would include sweeping new measures and clauses that would allow foreign corporations 'market access' to all public services and force governments to deregulate those services." For example, they could demand

equal treatment with public health or education systems, if there is any commerce-like aspect, such as payment of fees. In this way, they potentially could force the privatization of Canada's national health system, public education, electric or water utilities. Although services in the United States are already more privatized than in Canada, FTAA rules could not only force more privatization (of education, for example), but also lock in a privatized, deregulated regime in many countries that would be impossible to reverse while remaining within the FTAA.

It is no surprise that big corporations—especially U.S. service firms—and the free-market right are pushing such privatization agendas, but the trade agreements offer a back-door way for a foreign company to force a government to adopt policies under the guise of enforcing trade rules. Investor rights to challenge states are part of NAFTA and many bilateral trade agreements—and also were a key component of the temporarily



Those on both sides of the fence claimed to represent democracy.

favor right-leaning authoritarians like Peru's former president Alberto Fujimori, while attacking left-leaning populists like Chavez whose democratic credentials are called into question.

Those on both sides of the fence claimed to represent democracy, which indicates that the social critics of market-focused globalization have helped to shift the framework of debate. But the heart of the summit process is really the negotiation of the Free Trade Area by 2005, which the heads of state endorsed at the meeting. Although they promised to release the draft negotiating text, the only part leaked so far—the investment chapter—confirms that the FTAA is likely to be "even worse than NAFTA," according to Maude Barlow, chairwoman of the Council of Canadians, a leading citizens organization.

With a broad, vague definition of investment, the draft document will follow NAFTA in giving corporations—which would not be signatories to the agreement and would have no obligations under it—the power to overturn laws and collect

FORESTETHICS

disbanded Multilateral Agreement on Investment (MAI). Ironically, the United States argued in the one case brought against this country so far that such claims would mean that no country "could carry out its most fundamental government functions unless it was prepared to pay for each and every economic impact." Yet it is using the FTAA as a vehicle to expand such investor challenges to the rest of the hemisphere and to use as leverage in other global agreements. Even if corporations do not win every case, simply the threat of such challenges will have a chilling effect on public policy.

On Friday, April 20, when police drove a water cannon into the crowd of direct action supporters (before it was forced to retreat), a demonstrator stood in front of it with a sign saying simply, "Democracy," briefly echoing the famous image of the lone man against the tank in Tiananmen Square. The wall itself—10-feet high, anchored in concrete, cutting an ugly path through a beautiful old community—became a symbol of undemocratic trade negotiations: secretive, corporate and unresponsive to popular demands. "*Nous ne sommes pas de marchandise*," ("We are not merchandise") protesters chanted as they marched through the streets, while another demonstrator carried a plaintive placard reading, "Where is democracy?"

The turnout was huge, mainly from Canada, but also including contingents from the United States (from direct action militants who were not deterred by vigilant Canadian customs officials to 15 busloads of mainly union members from Jobs With Justice). Organizers of the Saturday march claimed 68,000 took part; police said 25,000; and it's reasonable to say that at least 45,000 participated, chanting "*So So So Solidarité*." But a survey commissioned by the unions revealed that one-fifth of Canadians would have liked to march in Quebec. (In addition, there were about 80 coordinated protests in the United States, some joined by roughly 300 protesters who were prohibited from entering Canada.)

There were probably close to 7,500 people at the protests on Friday, primarily younger students and workers, who left Laval University to march toward the fence, dividing between people going to a "green" zone with a low risk of arrest and a "yellow" zone of higher risk. Marching under the banner of the "convergence of anti-capitalist struggles," a group that had advocated what was euphemistically called "diversity of tactics," several thousand marchers arrived at a gate just east of the conference center.

At first they simply stood looking: There appeared to be nothing organized for anyone to do. Then a few people began throwing things—ranging from rolls of toilet paper to golf balls (and eventually large rocks and other more potent objects)—at the line of police in riot helmets and shields. Many front-line marchers were dressed in black, wearing helmets and face or gas masks, body padding and other gear for physical confrontation. As the police stood their ground 30 yards behind the fence, a few people climbed the gate, then with the help of others pulled it down. The crowd cheered, but only a few dozen people walked through the breach, most of them throwing objects at the police. Then the medieval faction—later identified as the Deconstructionist Institute for Surreal Topology—pulled up its home-made catapult and launched a pink stuffed animal at the police. Even ordinary citizens from the neighborhoods as well as nonviolent protesters celebrated the fall of the fence.

Although chanting pagans, street theater groups, drummers and individual anachronisms (like a young man dressed as an Easter bunny handing out chocolate candies) gave the promised air of a "carnival against capitalism," a monotony, rather than a diversity, of tactics was soon set for the next two days. Police began firing tear gas both at the rock throwers and into the surrounding crowd. While most people fled the stinging gas, a few militants picked up canisters and threw them back at the police. For the rest of the day on Friday, then for most of Saturday afternoon and evening, there was a give and take of protesters advancing on police, usually with a few people throwing things, then the police firing tear gas—as well as water cannons and rubber and plastic bullets—and then moving out to disperse the crowd.

Unlike the World Trade Organization protests in Seattle, there was no disciplined strategy of nonviolent civil disobedience. At the same time, the relatively few attacks on private property consisted mainly of spraying graffiti rather than smashing store windows, although one lone policeman along the march route was beaten badly. Clearly the relatively small number of people who fought with the police defined the action, leaving most others as observers waiting to flee the tear gas. Although at least 250 people eventually were arrested (many snatched from peaceful side streets Latin American-style by plainclothes police) and about 60 protesters were injured seriously, the police did not attempt mass arrests or resort to indiscriminate clubbing of bystanders. This

The medieval faction—later identified as the Deconstructionist Institute for Surreal Topology—pulled up its catapult and launched a pink stuffed animal at the police.

was not a Chicago 1968 police riot, though the police did become more aggressive on Saturday.

The organizers of the mass protest, mainly the Canadian labor movement, citizen groups and the Hemispheric Social Alliance—a group of 2,300 delegates from every Latin American country (including Cuba) who held an alternative Peoples' Summit—did not repudiate the militants. Their leaders even blamed the summit presidents for initiating the first vandalism, by building the wall and unleashing "the violence of the free market." But there was a sharp division on tactics. At a crucial point in the big march, militants chanting "to the left, not to the right"—both a logistical and political exhortation—tried to divert the crowd to the fence, but the vast majority followed the planned route leading away from the fence to a doleful parking lot near an arena.

The unions and citizen groups undoubtedly could not have produced the numbers and the variety of people if there had been a significant chance of violence or arrest, and it would have been irresponsible for them to lead the group to the fence under the circumstances. But the fence would have been the logical, dramatic culmination if there had been assurances that the actions would have included nothing beyond civil disobedience, such as organized mass arrests for entering the forbidden zone.

Protests like the ones in Quebec have energized the movement against corporate globalization, and summits and meetings of international institutions like the WTO and World Bank provide one of the few opportunities to catch the eye of the mass media. But the movement in opposition to the FTAA needs to go beyond such protests to build a broad political base rooted in communities throughout the Americas and engaged in the domestic politics of each country—such as the upcoming fight against “fast track” authority (now called “trade promotion”) in the U.S. Congress.

Also, although it's easier to generate popular resistance against bad trade deals, there's value in showing other ways to expand trade that deliver results for working people. The Hemispheric Social Alliance began developing its ideas on “alternatives for the Americas” at a gathering in Santiago, Chile, during the previous Summit of the Americas. At that time, there was more talk of fighting for reforms than outright

sector or the maquiladoras that use imported components to manufacture products almost entirely for export to the United States; meanwhile, real wages declined by roughly one-fifth for most employees. In Canada, growth slowed, inequality rose, wages stagnated, and there was a net job loss despite export growth.

The Hemispheric Social Alliance's alternative, which will be revised again following the summit, insists that integration of the Americas requires special efforts to encourage development of the poorer countries, since treating all countries as equal in an unregulated market simply exacerbates inequalities and favors the rich and powerful, no matter where they live. “Previously the question was what country will benefit and who will lose,” de la Cueva says. “The question now is who in each country will win, and who will lose?”

The Alliance supports trade and foreign investment, not as “ends in themselves, but rather [as] the instruments for achieving just and sustainable development.” For instance, it argues that governments should be able to regulate speculative capital flows and set requirements for foreign direct investment to encourage local development, and that citizen groups as well as governments should be able to sue corporations that violate rules, but investors should not be able to sue governments.

The Alliance is pushing for national referendums on the FTAA and its alternative. Meanwhile the Citizens Trade Campaign, a coalition based in the United States, is urging organizations to unite around a 10-point opposition to the FTAA, which includes: prohibiting investor-state lawsuits, protecting basic social rights and public services from trade rules, restricting corporate patents on life forms and medicine, safeguarding small farmers, preserving natural resources, prohibiting erosion of public interest laws, promoting sustainable development, limiting financial speculation and protecting women, minorities and indigenous people.

Despite the solidarity of the world leaders, there are tensions among even elites that could scuttle the FTAA: trade disputes (between Canada and the United States, the United States and Brazil, Brazil and Canada), competing strategies (such as Latin American regional alliances), revived discomfort with U.S. dominance (which would be worsened by the war against drugs and guerrillas financed under Plan Colombia), popular political pressures (as some leaders acknowledged, citing the protesters or doubters back home), misgivings of small, poor countries (some of whose leaders indicated in the closed session that aid and special treatment to spur development were their priorities), and political wild cards (like Chavez of Venezuela, who withheld his commitment to complete a deal by 2005).

When the FTAA was first proposed, the free market fundamentalists felt that they were in a position to secure a radically deregulated new global playing field for multinational corporations. In recent years, with the opposition movement growing in breadth and depth across the world, crises proliferating and popular misgivings growing, the climate for new “free trade” agreements has chilled. The winds of protest from Quebec make it even icier. ■

David Moberg is a senior editor of *In These Times* and fellow of The Nation Institute. His e-mail address is dmoberg@igc.org.



MICHEL KARPOFF/NEWSMAKERS

One-fifth of Canadians surveyed would have liked to march in Quebec.

opposition, says executive secretary Hector de la Cueva, a Mexican economist. But the experience with NAFTA, capped by the unexpectedly aggressive corporate use of investor challenges to governments, has persuaded more groups that the globalization model is fundamentally flawed.

Shortly before the Summit in Quebec, for example, the Economic Policy Institute, a progressive Washington think tank, released a study arguing that NAFTA has failed workers in all three countries. In the EPI analysis, NAFTA eliminated 766,000 actual and potential U.S. jobs, while increasing inequality, suppressing wages and weakening unions. Foreign direct investment grew in Mexico (though not total investment), but most of the job growth was either in the informal

NOT ONE, NOT TWO, BUT HUNDREDS OF PROTESTS

BY NAOMI KLEIN

QUEBEC

Maude Barlow, chairwoman of the Council of Canadians, is condemned for not calling off "Maude's Mob." Activist Jaggi Singh is in jail for allegedly possessing a weapon that he never owned or used—a theatrical catapult that shot stuffed animals over the infamous fence in Quebec City during the Summit of the Americas.

It's not just that the police didn't get the joke, it's that they don't get the new era of political protest, one adapted to our postmodern times. There was no one person or group who could call off "their people," because the tens of thousands who came out to protest the Free Trade Area of the Americas are part of a movement that doesn't have a leader, a center, or even an agreed-upon name. Yet undeniably, it exists nonetheless.



Visit Quebec: It's a gas, gas, gas.

What is difficult to convey in media reports is that there weren't two protests that took place in Quebec City—one a "peaceful" labor march, the other a "violent" anarchist riot. There were hundreds of protests. One was organized by a mother and daughter from Montreal. Another by a van load of grad students from Edmonton. Another by three friends from Toronto who aren't members of anything but their health clubs. Yet another by a couple of waiters from a local café on their lunch break.

Sure there were well organized groups in Quebec City: The unions had buses, matching placards and a parade route; the "black bloc" of anarchists had gas masks and radio links. But for days the streets also were filled with people who simply said to a friend, "Let's go to Quebec," and with Quebec City residents

who said, "Let's go outside." They didn't join one big protest, they participated in a moment.

How could it be otherwise? The traditional institutions that once organized citizens into neat, structured groups are all in decline: unions, religions, political parties. Yet something propelled tens of thousands of individuals to the streets anyway, an intuition, a gut instinct—perhaps just the profoundly human desire to be part of something larger than oneself.

Did they have their party-line together, a detailed dissection of the ins-and-outs of the FTAA? Not always. But neither can the Quebec protests be dismissed as vacuous political tourism. George W. Bush's message at the summit was that the mere act of buying and selling would do our governing for us. "Trade helps spread freedom," he said.

It was precisely this impoverished and passive vision of democracy that was rejected on the streets outside. Whatever else they were searching for, all were certainly looking for a taste of direct political participation. The result of these hundreds of miniature protests converging was chaotic, sometimes awful, but frequently inspiring. One thing is certain: After at last shaking off the mantle of political spectatorship, the last thing these people are about to do is hand over the reins to a cabal of would-be leaders.

The protesters will, however, become more organized, a fact which has more to do with the actions of police than the directives of Maude Barlow, Jaggi Singh or, for that matter, me. If people wandered and stumbled to Quebec City, profoundly unsure of what it meant to be part of a political movement, something united us all once we arrived: mass arrests, rubber bullets, but most of all, a thick white blanket of gas.

PIERRE ROUSSEL/NEWSMAKERS

Despite Canada's Liberal Party line of praising "good" protesters while condemning "bad" ones, treatment of everyone on the streets of Quebec City was crude, cowardly and indiscriminate. The security forces used the actions of a few rock throwers as a camera-friendly justification to do what they have been trying to do from the start: clear the city of thousands of lawful protesters because it was more convenient that way.

Once they got their "provocation," they filled entire neighborhoods with toxic fumes, forcing families to breathe through masks in their living rooms. Frustrated that the wind was against them, they sprayed some more. People giving the peace sign to the police were gassed. People handling our food were gassed. I met a 50-year-old

woman from Ottawa who told me cheerfully, "I went out to buy a sandwich and was gassed twice." People having a party under a bridge were gassed. People protesting their friends' arrests were gassed. The first-aid clinic treating people who had been gassed, was gassed.

Tear gas was supposed to break-down the protesters, but it had the opposite effect: It enraged and radicalized them enough to cheer for "Black Blockers" who dared to throw the canisters back. It may be light and atomized enough to ride on air, but I suspect the coming months will show that gas also has powerful bonding properties. ■

Naomi Klein is the author of *No Logo*. This story originally appeared in the *Globe and Mail*.

A DIVERSITY OF TACTICS?

BY ABBY SCHER

QUEBEC

Before Quebec, the debate about violent-versus-nonviolent tactics was pretty low-key. After Quebec, there will be no way to avoid taking a stand, one way or another.

As has been the case for months in the United States, the debate has been defined by those arguing for violent resistance to corporate-driven schemes. Though a tiny minority in number, they have energy and novelty on their side, forcing the majority to contend with their argument that nonviolence is tired, old and ineffectual.

Even as some 50,000 unionists, environmentalists, youth and women's groups marched in an enormous demonstration below, a battle raged on the bluffs of Boulevard Rene Levesque and Cote d'Abraham on April 21, as hundreds of young people charged the 2.5 mile chain-link fence "protecting" the heads of state and corporate elites who had come for what should have been a massive photo opportunity. Besides smiling for the cameras, little work was actually required of these men because their trade ministers had already negotiated the joint statement on the Free Trade Area of the Americas weeks before.



KONRAD FISHER

"As much as some of us would like to process shit forever, we need to take action."

But the public relations battle was won by their nonviolent and violent opponents, as even the *Wall Street Journal* conceded: "Environmentalists, union members and anti-globalization activists, Mr. Bush's most vocal critics on trade policy, often stole the show."

"The violent response to protesters does not lend credibility to government reassurances that labour, environmental and democracy concerns about the proposed FTAA will be addressed," trumpeted a column in Toronto's *Globe and Mail*.

The division between the peaceful march and the bluffs was not as sharp as might appear to the TV cameras. As in Seattle, unionists peeled off from the march to join the young people at the fence, and thousands of peaceful opponents of the summit crowded the bluffs, pushing close to the fence and engaging in a sit-in that police tear gassed as readily as the fence fighters. Despite the riot police's ready use of water cannons, tear gas and even rubber bullets (a first in Canada), it was hard to keep the Canadian Auto Workers on the peaceful march, reported an activist from that union. "They see that some of the violent demonstrators have been successful," she told the *Montreal Gazette*.

Quebec was the latest in a series of escalating protests that have engulfed Canada since 1996. That year, some 300,000 peaceful demonstrators protested in the streets of Toronto against the conservative government. From there, police, and some demonstrators, have grown increasingly violent, starting with the Vancouver Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APAC) meetings in 1997, where police pepper-sprayed demonstrators, into the small protest against the Organization of American States meeting in Windsor, Ontario in the spring of 2000, where police aggressively and illegally arrested protesters. Around the same time, members of the Ontario Coalition against Poverty rumbled with Toronto police after the right-wing legislature refused to allow the group to speak.

In Quebec, powerful unions refused to march to the bluffs because they did not want anything to do with the anarchists planning more militant tactics. A coalition of 34 Quebec groups worked with the unions to organize the nonviolent "People's March" and to provide accommodations, a "welcome center" and other support for the thousands of protesters coming to the city.

But the People's March lasted for what felt like forever, ending up in a parking lot with no place to sit and rest. Why not link hands and encircle the fence with miles of unionists and environmentalists, side by side, suggested *Village Voice* writer Sarah Ferguson. Instead, people just stood around or walked back. The lack of creative ideas stood in stark contrast to the commitment of those charging the fence despite unbearable tear gas attacks.

On Sunday morning, activists awoke to find that the peaceful, "liberated" area below the bluffs had been trashed. And not only bank windows were smashed. (One on the bluffs was scrawled with the plaintive, "We're sorry, we tried to stop them.") The army-navy store where many of the demonstrators had bought gas masks and other equipment to crash the barricades also had

its windows bashed in. "You don't trash your own area," complained one veteran '60s radical.

But Howl, an anarchist who trained young people at Bard and Vassar in direct action before the demonstrations, reported that at the sessions, "We got into property destruction, which I think is bullshit to call violence."

In the student debates of violence versus nonviolence she led, Howl said, "People are recognizing the difference between violence and nonviolence, and right and wrong. I

think people are exploring more of the differences between those things. They also are debating what violence is, defining it as anywhere from eating meat to bearing arms. I thought a lot about why it's OK to have a violent struggle in other places but not here."

I quoted to her some words I once heard from an older anarchist in another context: "As an activist, I want to disarm the violence of the situation so people can act and another process can begin. Any violence we bring to that situation helps the people in their unthinkable violence toward us. As anarchists we are asking the imagination to take power, and violence is intimidating the imagination and not linked to people's liberation."

"That statement bugs me because it makes a huge assumption about time," Howl replied. "For most people [the social crisis is] really urgent and really immediate. I think that's the kind of attitude that turns off people of color and working-class folks because of the perceived wishy-washy nature of anarchism. As much as some of us would like to process shit forever, we need to take action."

Howl also dismissed arguments that violence interferes with organizing a broader political base or produces a

vanguard-style politics. Nonviolence can also be vanguardism, she said, and many of the people of color she organizes want "action," not another demonstration. She echoed the phrase heard from many other activists at this moment: We need a "diversity of tactics."

A diversity of tactics reaches those who want to express themselves through petitions and voting as well as more militant folks. But violence can be demobilizing, as the experienced '60s activist saw in his days at the University of Wisconsin. He recalls that when anti-war activists bombed the Army/Math building that was supporting bombing raids of Vietnam, a graduate student was killed, and then the broader anti-war coalition fractured and dissolved.

Is Quebec, with its uneasy alliance of a few Molotov cocktail throwers, hundreds of fence attackers, and thousands of nonviolent protesters, a wonderful demonstration of "a diversity of tactics"—or a turning point where the gap between tactics yawns larger? ■

Abby Scher is director of Independent Press Association-New York, and formerly served as co-editor of Dollars and Sense magazine.

WALL DONE

BY DAVID GRAEBER

QUEBEC

The single most dramatic moment of the protests in Quebec came on the first day of the summit, when the thousands of protesters who had marched through the city finally reached "the wall." Until that point no one had seen a single cop. Now, a phalanx of riot police, armed to the teeth with tear gas, pepper bombs and plastic bullets, waited silently behind the chain-link fence. There was a momentary pause, and then hundreds of masked activists—ranging from black-clad anarchists to Mohawk Warriors—descended on the wall itself, produced grappling hooks and wire cutters, and began to systematically tear it down.

This was not simply a fortuitous target of opportunity: a month before, a call had gone out over the Internet—put out by anarchists and members of the newly formed American branch of Ya Basta!, originally an Italian group, which has been calling for principles of free immigration and global citizenship—for "all people held back by walls to converge in Quebec City to take direct action against the security perimeter."

Attacks on the wall were echoed by actions against border posts across North America. In Vermont, there were "people's assemblies" along the border at spots where the Canadian government was systematically denying entry to anyone who so much as looked like an activist. Several hundred activists occupied the Peace Bridge in Buffalo; thousands rallied on both sides of the crossing between San Diego and Tijuana; in Blaine, Washington, 4,000 activists and union members from the United States and Canada marched across a border bridge

and seized customs posts before finally being dislodged by the Royal Canadian Mounted Police.

Walls and borders were the perfect symbols: Treaties like the FTAA allegedly promote a process that is making nation-states and national borders increasingly irrelevant. The reality is that corporate globalization is premised on exactly the opposite of a free flow of people, products and ideas. Rather it is based on keeping the majority of the world's population trapped behind increasingly fortified borders, within which even existing social services can be withdrawn, and then removing all restrictions which might have kept Nike and The Gap from taking full advantage of their resultant desperation.

In fact, the size of the U.S. Border Patrol has almost tripled since the signing of NAFTA, and the Immigration and Naturalization Service (along with police forces and prisons) is about the only branch of government that is actually growing. By fortifying the border and placing dozens of activists in arbitrary detention to prevent them from being able to express their ideas in Quebec, the Canadian government was merely subjecting mostly white activists to the sort of violence most of the world's population face every day.

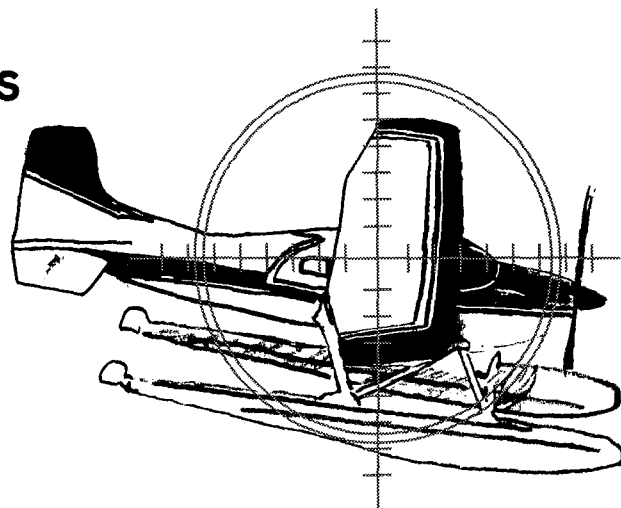
More than anything, the attacks on walls and borders demonstrated that the rapidly growing movement of global resistance is not an "anti-globalization movement" at all. It is, or is rapidly becoming, a movement for real globalization, for the genuine free movement of people, possessions and ideas.

It is not clear whether the movement will ever be able to get this point across to the corporate media. When it comes to the free flow of ideas at least, the corporate media constitutes the greatest wall of all (and indeed, activists are increasingly debating whether the next step is direct action against the media). But with so many unions rapidly switching their positions from nationalistic nativism to actual support for increased immigration and amnesty for undocumented workers, we might well be seeing the beginnings of an historic transformation. ■

DRUG WAR INC.

AN ALABAMA CONTRACTOR'S TIES TO THE DOWNING OF A PLANE OF MISSIONARIES IN PERU

BY JASON VEST
WASHINGTON



In January 1998, five twin-engine Cessna Citation V jets owned by the Defense Department arrived at Alabama's Maxwell Air Force Base. Their landing was heralded by the local *Montgomery Advertiser*, which noted in a short but enthusiastic piece that the aircraft were part of a \$10 million program the military had outsourced to a recently incorporated local contractor.

According to the paper, the new company, Aviation Development Corporation, had been retained to test state-of-the-art airborne radar, forward-looking infrared, and signals intercept sensors—sensors that, according to a base spokesman, had broad applications for aerial law enforcement operations and military search-and-rescue missions. It wasn't a stretch to conclude that the sensors-equipped aircraft were destined for Latin America, where a number of private military companies have spent the past decade flying a variety of anti-drug missions for the U.S. government.

On April 20, 2001, a Peruvian air force jet shot down a small single-prop plane full of Baptist missionaries, killing Veronica Bowers and her infant daughter. The Baptist plane was not fingered by the Peruvians, but by what the *Washington Post* initially reported was a CIA surveillance aircraft—a Cessna Citation V, to be precise. Subsequent reports noted that the aircraft was in fact owned by the Defense Department, but operated by a crew of outside contractors who have gone unidentified—a perfect example if the lack of accountability due to the privatization of the drug war.

An *In These Times* investigation has revealed that the contract aircrew is likely employed by Aviation Development Corporation, the same company that handled the Cessna surveillance tests in Alabama. "All I'm going to say about who was flying that plane in Peru," a Pentagon official told *In These Times*, "is that you should look around Maxwell Air Force Base," where ADC is based.

No one answers ADC's phone, and its president, Edward A. "Lex" Thistlethwaite Jr., did not return messages left at his home. Despite having a listing in the Maxwell Air Force Base phone directory, spokesman Capt. Ken Hoffman was also unable to reach anyone from ADC. Nor was he able to find anyone at the base who knew anything about the company or the current location of the Cessna Citations.

When Glenn Owen—whom Alabama records list as the company's secretary—was reached at his home, he refused to answer any questions about ADC's connections with the U.S. government or its Latin American operations. "I'm not free to comment," he said, refusing to elaborate. "And I don't see anyone getting back to you."

In the name of counter-narcotics, the U.S. government has been waging a private war in the Andes for years. While active-duty U.S. soldiers are allowed to train South American military units, under congressional mandate and Pentagon regulations, they're not allowed to take part in combat, and limitations are placed on the number of personnel who can be in-country. (For example, Plan Colombia caps the number of active-duty soldiers in-country at 500.)

However, the same restrictions do not apply to private military companies under contract with the U.S. government. While a State Department rule technically prohibits contractors from taking part in combat operations, the rule has been clearly violated, and a handful of contractors have been killed in combat operations. Three helicopter pilots employed by Virginia-based DynCorp were shot down and killed in Peru in 1992, and this past February, four DynCorp "contractors"—all ex-Special Forces—ended up in a near-fatal firefight rescuing the crew of a helicopter downed by Colombian FARC rebels.

Because these U.S. agents in Latin America are contractors, as opposed to actual servicemen, both their activities and their deaths attract little attention. This is hardly surprising given the notoriously opaque qualities intrinsic to private military companies, and very attractive to U.S. policy-makers who tremble at the thought of actual servicemen either being linked to local human rights violators or shipped home in coffins.

Drug war critics have long argued that it's time to reconsider this approach to overseas counter-narcotics operations. On April 25, Rep. Jan Schakowsky (D-Illinois) introduced the Andean Region Contractor Accountability Act, a measure that calls for the U.S. government to cease using outsourced contractors as surrogates for American military and law enforcement elements in the Andes.

The bill's introduction came a day after Schakowsky and Rep. Cynthia McKinney (D-Georgia) sent a letter to President Bush asking him not only to cease aerial intelligence sharing with all the Andean countries, but to "immediately suspend all contracts with private military firms and individuals for narcotics control and law enforcement services in the Andean region."

Holding that the Bowers incident was a direct result of U.S. drug policy, the duo added: "The U.S. uses private military companies in its drug operations throughout Latin America, and they operate largely out of the public eye. Now

STEVE ANDERSON

In the book's conclusion, Kamen devotes just three paragraphs to social consciousness and activism. Most tellingly, the final sentence of the section, seemingly tagged on as an afterthought, reads: "I'm not suggesting the creation of a communist state, but we do need some basic safety nets and more recognition of the interdependence of everyone in society." It's a good point; after all, if all these women are emphasizing that everything needs to be individualized, then what happens to things like social provision? Still, it would have been better to see a somewhat more coherent and powerful analysis of the political implications of this incredibly individualized generation of women.

Kamen is fond of discussing the male-female divide in sexual behavior; indeed, her conclusion is rife with it, and she goes so far as to say that disconnecting sex from the "rest of human experience" is a male trait, and one which women would do well to stay away from. This kind of

essentializing rhetoric is a bit difficult to swallow; after all, plenty of young feminists have argued for separating sex and love, largely to increase women's freedom to experiment with their physical pleasure. Kamen oversimplifies things, and while there should be no shame in wanting an emotional connection in tandem with sex, she borders on chastising those who don't have the need for one.

The most frustrating thing about *Her Way*, aside from its occasional tendency to drag on, is that while Kamen goes out of her way to note that not all women's experiences are the same, it's not carried throughout the book. Kamen dutifully notes, over the course of about four pages, that all women have begun to act more like men, and that the greatest changes have occurred for white middle-class women. What would have been good is to have a more coherent and consistently acknowledged outline of differences between the white middle-class "norm" and women of other races and

classes. The book ends up feeling like it's about white women, even though Kamen has done her homework and, early on, made the necessary disclaimer that different women have different experiences. For instance, Kamen ends an early chapter by noting that women are no longer being "swept away" by sex—a dynamic that in many ways is limited to white, middle-class women.

But in the end, *Her Way* is still a useful text, and it is sure to make its way into women's studies courses. This kind of meticulous data gathering, particularly on this topic, is rare. *Her Way* will not fill an inspirational void, but you'll be hard-pressed to find a more informative collection of data and personal anecdotes on the state of women and sex in America. ■

Tracie McMillan is the editor of the activist, the magazine of the Young Democratic Socialists. She can be reached at theactivist@bigfoot.com.

Convenient Inventions

By Steve Weinberg

When novelists who write historical fiction and biographers converse with one another about their crafts, the novelists sometimes express amazement at how compellingly a biography can read despite nothing being made up.

The Man Who Found The Missing Link: Eugène Dubois and His Lifelong Quest to Prove Darwin Right
By Pat Shipman
Simon & Schuster
514 pages, \$28

Biographers sometimes reply they are a bit envious that novelists are allowed to invent events and dialogue and are able to include informed speculation to fill gaps in the public record.

Now a few accomplished biographers are taking their envy one step further than conversation, by actually including invented information in their books. These are not the desperate

techniques of an Edmund Morris trying to salvage his Ronald Reagan biography or face repaying a multimillion-dollar advance from the publisher. Rather, these are the well-thought-out, unconventional techniques of authors who think biography can be redefined without losing its audience.

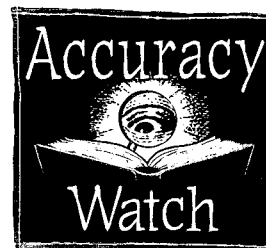
The immediate controversy centers on a biography of Eugène Dubois written by Pat Shipman, a Pennsylvania State University adjunct anthropology professor turned biographer. To set the stage for Shipman's controversial approach, a bit about why she decided to write the biography is useful. Dubois, a Dutch anthropologist who lived from 1858 to 1940, is not a household name. But his discovery of *Pithecanthropus erectus*, now called *Homo erectus* by anthropologists, altered what humans know about their ancestry.

Dubois' general lack of recognition among the world's populace is precisely why Shipman decided to devote years of her life to writing his biography. Unlike so many biographers, Shipman's goal is to celebrate non-celebrities. A decade ago, Shipman quit her life of field and laboratory research to write about scientific discoveries for popular audiences.

Shipman also chose Dubois because of his controversial personal life and argumentative science career. She believed both would resonate with readers two generations after Dubois' death. Dubois' birth came 18 months after the discovery, in Germany, of a Neanderthal skeleton, and a year before Charles Darwin published *The Origin of Species*.

"The one was the first tangible proof of human evolution," Shipman says. "The other was the theory that would make the find comprehensible by placing it in a context."

At age 10, Dubois read about a lecture by German biologist Karl Vogt on evolutionary theory, to be presented near his Dutch hometown in Limburg. A precocious child already deeply interested in scientific discovery,



Dubois read everything he could find about the lecture, which his father would not allow him to attend in person. From that day forward, Shipman believes, Dubois' life course was set.

That life course led Dubois to give up a stable academic job in Amsterdam to join the Dutch East India Company as a surgeon so he could dig for fossil evidence of the missing evolutionary link. Sure that what is now Indonesia would yield such fossil evidence, Dubois relocated his family to be near him while he fed his obsession. The move pretty much destroyed Dubois' family life, personal friendships and professional relationships. But he turned out to be correct about finding fossil remains in the Dutch East Indies. Shipman compellingly tells the saga of the seemingly hopeless search, explaining along the way how the force of personality can be more important than the stereotypical scientific objectivity when it comes to advancing knowledge.

Much of the book's second half is devoted to Dubois' "ownership" of the fossil remains, and how he descended into increasing isolation when critics doubted the authenticity and significance of his field work. "Tragically, Dubois' strong personality and irascible disposition harmed his reputation," Shipman concludes. "Whatever Dubois did, it was with such focused intensity that he drew criticism as a lightning rod draws electricity. He challenged, argued, insisted, persevered; he stretched the minds of his friends and enemies alike; he demanded an ever-higher standard of thinking and performance. No one ever forgot Dubois; no one who ever knew him was the same afterward. Though inadvertently, this paranoid, brilliant and stubborn man truly cast his own fate."

Shipman is a first-rate researcher, so she's entitled to draw conclusions. Her pride in her accomplishment leads her to close the book like this: "His story became notorious, told and mistold many times, until it reached mythic proportions. It is time now for the truth, and I have told it."

Well, maybe. There is a lot of argument within the craft of biography about whether the "truth" of a life can ever be known. It is clear from the opening page of Shipman's

book that she is a practitioner of psychobiography, that she believes she can get inside the mind of a subject she has never met.

Her opening page includes a scene from 1937, in which Dubois, about to turn 80, is opening a letter from a long-lost friend. Shipman writes that when Dubois picks up the letter, "He is momentarily confused by the two handwritings on the envelope. The hand that wrote his name is crabbed and somehow familiar, but he cannot place it immediately; the other, which wrote the address, is completely

**Shipman writes
in a tiny endnote,
"There is no
documentary
evidence of this
letter whatsoever."**

unknown to him. When he opens that envelope and sees the tissue-thin paper inside, something stirs in his memory. As soon as he reads the salutation, he knows, as if he has been expecting this letter for years."

How does Shipman know all that external and internal detail? She never says. Although the book contains copious endnotes, they cover only a tiny bit of how Shipman knows what she says she knows. Nowhere in the book does Shipman devote space to a detailed, coherent explanation of her biographical practice and theory. There is a clue in the Author's Note. After explaining to readers that Dubois' daughter Eugénie destroyed some of the evidence about his life, Shipman says her endnotes "indicate where I have filled in intriguing omissions resulting from Eugénie's actions." For most readers, the import of that cryptic sentence is quite likely to be lost.

The explanations in the endnotes do not serve readers well, either. On page 167, for instance, Shipman quotes from a note she tells readers Dubois scribbled, then sent by messenger. In that note, he admits to making a mistake about dating a skullcap. In the endnote, on page 461, Shipman says,

"There is no documentary evidence of this letter whatsoever," then leaves her invention at that. I wonder how many readers will even look at the endnote. Of those who do, I wonder how many will feel as betrayed as I felt.

The current issue of *The American Scholar* contains an explanation by Shipman, a six-page essay under the headline "Missing Links: A Scientist Reconstructs Biography." Shipman says that just as a paleoanthropologist must deduce information about the evolution of humans from partial skeletal remains, so must a biographer deduce information from the partial written record of a life.

She was frustrated because hardly any documentation existed for three events that Shipman believed vital to understanding Dubois—two deaths and a suspected episode of adultery. "Omitting those poorly known events ... or downplaying their significance in Dubois' life would be both inaccurate and dishonest," Shipman says. "Including them and giving them the emphasis and attention I believe they deserve would mean deviating from the strictly factual. Which was I to choose?"

Shipman chose invention. She did not choose it thoughtlessly, as her essay (but not the book itself) demonstrates. Her arguments in the essay are interesting. In the end, though, I find them unpersuasive. Inventing information is a slippery slope. I will not try to navigate that slope, and I hope other biographers turn away from Shipman's methods. Even if biographers adopt Shipman's methods, there is no excuse for keeping readers almost entirely in the dark about such controversial techniques.

Shipman's Dubois biography is worth reading. It ought to be cited in future works on Dubois with caution, however, because of its inventions. Meanwhile, if the Dubois biography is republished as a paperback, let us hope the *American Scholar* essay is included between the book's covers. ■

Steve Weinberg is the author of two biographies, with a third in progress from his home in Columbia, Missouri. He has also published a book about the craft of biography. His e-mail address is weinbergs@missouri.edu.

Partial Recall

By Joshua Rothkopf

Returning to the scene of your crime is, generally speaking, not the swiftest idea. So goes the lesson of one too many a half-mastermind who ever lingered over a job well done. That said, it is possible to get away with it, especially if you're young, audacious and British-born—like director Christopher Nolan, who pulls off something perversely close with his *Memento*, a murder mystery

Memento
Written and directed
by Christopher Nolan

told from back to front. That makes the first victim the killer, right? Not so fast. Armed with a confidence just short of stupefying—this is only his second feature—Nolan boldly shoots first and asks questions later: We start on a point-blank mess, the film's first blown mind (literally). Actually it's a Polaroid snapshot of the corpse, but wait a moment and the image starts to fade to gray; an impatient hand finally shakes it clean of all transgressions, deep red or otherwise. Blood? What blood?

Nolan can't keep this camera trickery up forever (and you wouldn't want him to, unless you were living in a black hole) but what he quickly settles into is just as wicked: a reverse chronology with each scene chasing the tail of the previous one. *Memento* may be the first whodunit to dispose of the who, the done and the it; these we already know (that is, if our eyes are to be trusted) en route toward deeper pleasures of questionable motives, doubt and blurred identity. It's diabolical stuff, the kind of art-noir designed to beg the employ of entire filmclubs of amateur sleuths, as did its crafty older cousins, *Blow Up* and *Don't Look Now*.

Puzzle-solving demands varying levels of faith, the merest being a presumption of some kind of logic in its god and maker. Nolan qualifies

easily; his screenplay is nothing if not rigorously thought-out. But film puzzles would also seem to require the promise of a salvation more visionary than a jigsaw puzzle's cute completion. It's on this score that *Memento* has its ace, a central character at an even greater handicap than we are. Leonard (Guy Pearce) suffers from a rare brain disorder—the result of a violent home invasion that also left his wife dead—that makes it impossible for him to create new memories. He's a walking case of mental hiccups, and Nolan's receding storyline is the backslapper; just when you begin to catch your breath in the time warp, Leonard is explaining his "condition" to a motel desk clerk who may be

ally came last—and suddenly we've become lost Leonards ourselves. Moreover, Leonard may be busy avenging his wife's murder (no small feat for someone who has to remind himself to shave every morning), but since his quest appears fulfilled from the start, we're free to work on solving *him*; and that's going to take some scrutiny.

Primarily, there's his "system," an assiduous compilation of scribbled notes, Polaroids and (most arrestingly) a troubled scrawl of tattoos covering his entire torso. Leonard needs these just to pick up his investigation day by day, but their boldface speaks beyond necessity to a kind of consumption: "Yeah, I got a reason," he says, gazing in a mirror at some conveniently inverted text running across his chest that reads, "JOHN G. RAPED AND MURDERED MY WIFE." It's more than a little spooky; Leonard's not



DANNY ROTHENBERG

Spelling out the plot of *Memento*.

bilking the poor guy out of several rooms' rent.

Perhaps it's here that I felt my own condition coming on, but that's largely the point; *Memento* would only be half as fun with only one gimmick or the other. Instead, the backward storytelling and the frozen man make for a wonderful pair, combining into something far more redemptive than it sounds. You never know what's up next—except for the fact that it actu-

ally come last—and suddenly we've become lost Leonards ourselves. Moreover, Leonard may be busy avenging his wife's murder (no small feat for someone who has to remind himself to shave every morning), but since his quest appears fulfilled from the start, we're free to work on solving *him*; and that's going to take some scrutiny.

Guy Pearce modulates what might have been a one-note part with just the right amount of bitterness: He's a bit of a prick, but who can blame him? (Not that he'd remember anyway.) There's a clipped menace to his whole

conception: the electrified hair, the chirps from his Jaguar's car alarm, the two vertical slashes running down his left cheek. Leonard likes to bring up the story of one of his old cases (he can still remember things from before the accident)—a policy-holder named Sammy who once claimed the same debilitating mental condition as his—and when he does, it's with the slightest superiority of a former bullshit detector who can't unlearn old habits.

But Nolan, with good humor, relishes in running blitzes on his stubborn character, as he does with a brief montage of Leonard's softer memories of his wife—so unlike the cold hard facts he swears by—that lulls a diner conversation down to a buzz of lights. Memory is treachery (this Leonard knows; it's written on his arm), though not for the reason he claims—its fallibility—but in the way it sandbags him with unbearable richness from across his oblivion. Elsewhere his frustrations seem like inspired evocations of noir conven-

If our eyes are to be trusted, *Memento* may be the first whodunit to dispose of the who, the done and the it.

tions, like waking up next to a mysterious woman he can't remember, or forgetting in mid-stride if he's chasing a thug or being chased himself.

All this hot pursuit takes place in and around Los Angeles, site of so many a noir nail-nibbler from *D.O.A.* to *Blade Runner*. The city, though, is hardly the Chanderlesque maze of smoky parlors and deep shadows you might expect, but a washed-out prefab zone of blue-doored motel rooms over whose transoms slide mysterious letters. (Think the hyperrealism of David Lynch's *Lost*

Highway and you've got it.) As tour guides, Leonard is given an angel and a devil for each shoulder, though I'll leave you to decide which is which: the grinning Teddy (Joe Pantoliano) or the leonine Natalie (Carrie-Anne Moss). Both performers played a similar advisory tagteam on Keanu Reeves' plunge into *The Matrix*; like that film's hero, Leonard grows uncertainly into knowledge and power, a loose cannon attracting several handlers to help him with his aim.

By the time *Memento* blooms into its exciting beginnings, its recoil has far less sting than this slippery psychology, and one applauds Nolan's daring out of sheer respect. Not every vengeance machine would merit the curiosity of a Leonard, whose future seems far from certain: "How am I supposed to heal if I can't feel time?" With damaged minds such as these, the speculation runs endless—until there's no more room for tattoos. ■

Joshua Rothkopf frequently reviews films for *In These Times*. He can be reached at JoshRoth@aol.com.

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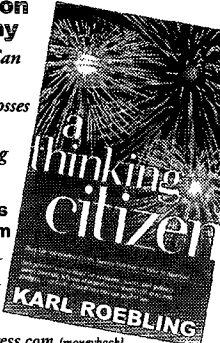
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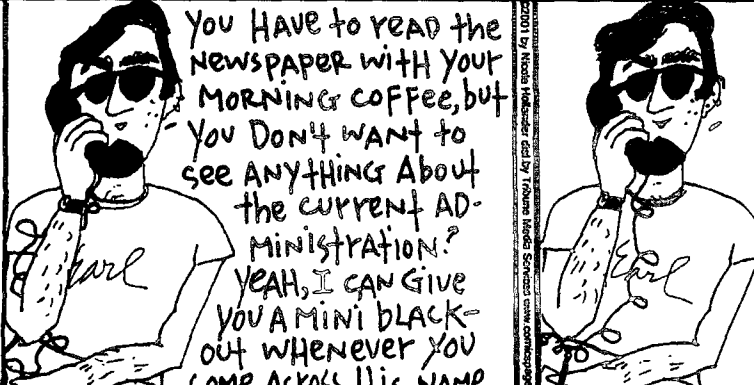
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By Steve Wishnia

In the beginning was the Ramones. You can still hear impassioned barroom arguments about where punk-rock started—New York? London? the Stooges? any of a thousand obscure '60s garage bands?—but the Ramones indisputably codified the sound of the fury, a blitzkrieg of eighth-note guitar downstrokes and bass hammer-ons.

Buried under the noise—and all the hype about punk being a lot of negative, destructive, no-talent junk—the Ramones were brilliant songwriters. Their songs had verses, choruses, bridges and hooks—beautifully crafted, energetic and innocent like the Brill Building pop tunes they exploded. "Rockaway Beach" has got to be the best rock 'n' roll summer song ever, from its "ONE-TWO-THREE-FOUR!" intro to its Beatles/Beach Boys bridge, a whole universe flashing by in two-and-a-half minutes.

For punk rockers, the death of lead singer Joey Ramone of lymphoma on April 15—he was 49—was like John Lennon's: a beloved, seminal figure gone too soon. Not only did the Ramones give punk a definition, condensing a signature sound out of a nebulous assortment of New York bands, but they far outlasted any of their '70s contemporaries, surviving into the mid-'90s. Their radical simplicity—their 1976 first album was recorded for \$6,000 and featured not one guitar solo—was a revelation to a generation of neurotic outsiders, creating an alternate universe where "Sheena Is a Punk Rocker" ruled the charts.

And they were fun, combining wonderfully warped humor with a melodic blast intense enough to explode white mice. I remember coming home in the subway from their Central Park show in 1980, one of us shouting "LOBOTOMY!" and someone on the opposite platform yelling back, "LOBOTOMY!" That kind of rock 'n' roll community's long gone now, or maybe I've aged out of it, or maybe it's passed on to rave and hip-hop; punk was a failed revolution, unable to dent the music business and the star system that turns everything into product.

It's hard to re-imagine just how hated punk was in the '70s, now that green hair is a common affectation and "Blitzkrieg Bop" a beer commercial. Even the erstwhile rebels of the post-hippie rock scene denounced punk in prudish-parent terminology. This pretty much denied the Ramones commercial success—neither 1977's *Rocket to Russia*, widely considered their best album, 1978's *Road to Ruin*, despite the ubiquity of "I Wanna Be Sedated," nor their 1980 collaboration with Phil Spector cracked the Top 40.

(In his autobiography, *Lobotomy*, bassist Dee Dee Ramone recalls Spector as a drunken control freak, holding the band hostage at gunpoint.) But they persevered, touring hard and putting out a consistent string of albums. The band's interpersonal dynamics got severely strained, causing Dee Dee to leave, but by the '90s they were playing football stadiums in Argentina and Brazil.

Unlike British punk, the original New York punk was not overtly rebellious; in fact, it was often militantly apolitical, a reaction to post-hippie rock's pretension and sanctimony. (Guitarist Johnny Ramone was once quoted as saying "punks should have no politics or be right-wing.") But between the influence of the younger "hard-core" punk bands of the Reagan era and Dee Dee turning to face his personal demons and political nightmares, the Ramones changed in the '80s, starting with 1984's *Too Tough to Die*. Joey's contribution was "Bonzo Goes to Bitburg," a bell-seasoned bemoaning of Ronald Reagan's 1985 visit to an SS cemetery.

It's easy to overestimate the political significance of punk. One can understand the impulse to use fashion to signify rebellion, to be a walking billboard blaring *I defy your society of pap and greed, your force-propped authority*—but dressing up funny never made a revolution, nor did buying records and going to shows. That lesson was driven home hard in the early '90s, when

the success of Nirvana translated into global

entertainment conglomerates marketing rebellion-lite as "alternative." Still, punk, especially the do-it-yourself ethos of the '80s hardcore scene, spawned legions of young activists. If it weren't for punk rock, the black flag of anarchy would be a minor historical footnote in between Emma Goldman and Leon Czolgosz.

Whatever. Punk rock produced some of the liveliest, most vital music ever. And Joey Ramone was its goofy, impassioned godfather, a misfit from a Queens high-rise who embodied the spirit of New York City rock 'n' roll. It may have been a minority obsession, but it was a fierce one. When I heard the news on April 15, I put on the radio—Joey deserved a 24-hour all-Ramones marathon—but the classic-rock station was playing Creedence, R.E.M. and Elton John, and the modern-rock station was playing some Pearl Jam or Alice in Chains knockoff. I turned it off and put on "We Want the Airwaves," "I Wanna Be Your Boyfriend" and "The KKK Took My Baby Away." ■

Steve Wishnia, senior editor at High Times, is author of *Exit 25 Utopia* and former bass player in the False Prophets.

